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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: WASIT: DAWA COURTING TRIBAL SHEIKHS

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Robert Kagler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)  
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11. (U) This is a PRT Wasit reporting cable.

12. (C //REL TO USA, ACGU) Summary: On October 18, Al Kut's Special Weapons and Tactics (KSWAT) leader Major Aziz hosted a meeting of tribal sheikhs from across Wasit Province. While nominally a security-related meeting set up by Aziz to gain tribal support for Iraqi Security Forces, the meeting, attended by over 150 tribal sheikhs, was also clearly organized to gain support for Prime Minister Maliki's Dawa party in the upcoming Provincial elections. Sheikh Numany, introduced as a Maliki advisor, explained that the PM backed the tribes, supported their traditional role in Iraqi society, and believed that they have a role in Iraq's future. This role would include a new Maliki proposal for a Tribal Congress at the national level. This Tribal Congress would have an active participatory role in national government decisions, especially concerning agriculture. End summary.

KSWAT Seeks Support

13. (C //REL TO USA, ACGU) KSWAT is an Interior Ministry Police entity directly controlled from Baghdad and therefore not under the control of the Provincial Chief of Police, who was not represented at the meeting. Major Aziz, whose KSWAT unit has been accused of using heavy-handed tactics, asked the tribal sheikhs to support KSWAT and the other Iraqi security forces in the province. The sheikhs were provided a traditional meal, music, and gifts courtesy of Major Aziz. Speakers Support Maliki

14. (C //REL TO USA, ACGU) Sheikh Mohammad Reda Abed Bedewy al-Numany, who is reported to be an old friend of Maliki from his exile days in Syria, opened the meeting with a pro-Maliki speech clearly designed to win tribal support for the Prime Minister. Speaking of the need to organize the tribes, he warned the assembled tribal leaders not to be fooled by people who ask for tribal support but will not help them once in office. Numany went on to ask the tribes to take their place in the leadership of the country and elaborated on a Maliki plan to create a Tribal Congress to help direct Iraq in the future. He followed with a thinly veiled threat that if this uniting of the tribes behind the government failed it would spell the end for the tribes as their power would be eliminated by another unnamed government. He further stated that the tribes must prove that they can lead in establishing security and peace and in the elections. He finished the speech with a rhetorical question of "who leads the move for tribal support" and answered with "PM Maliki does." Several Wasit tribal sheikhs also spoke, echoing the themes of tribal leadership, the need to vote in the provincial elections, and support for PM Maliki and the Interior Minister.

15. (C //REL USA, ACGU) Comment: While KSWAT has been effective at suppressing anti-government and anti-coalition activities in Wasit, its tactics have often been seen by local people as heavy-handed. In reaching out to the sheikhs Major Aziz is likely trying to repair his and his unit's reputation and perhaps cement his standing with the

traditional leaders of the province. However, despite the overt security theme of the meeting, this gathering of tribal sheikhs was clearly used by Maliki supporters to try to win the support of Wasit,s traditional tribal leaders for Maliki and his party,s candidates in the provincial elections. End comment.

CROCKER